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ARTS, CRAFTS AND THE HOME



FRONT VIEW OF "THE BIVOUAC," HOME OF GEN. HARRISON GRAY OTIS

A GIFT TO LOS ANGELES

WILL THE ANGELS KNOW HOW TO FOSTER THE PLANT?

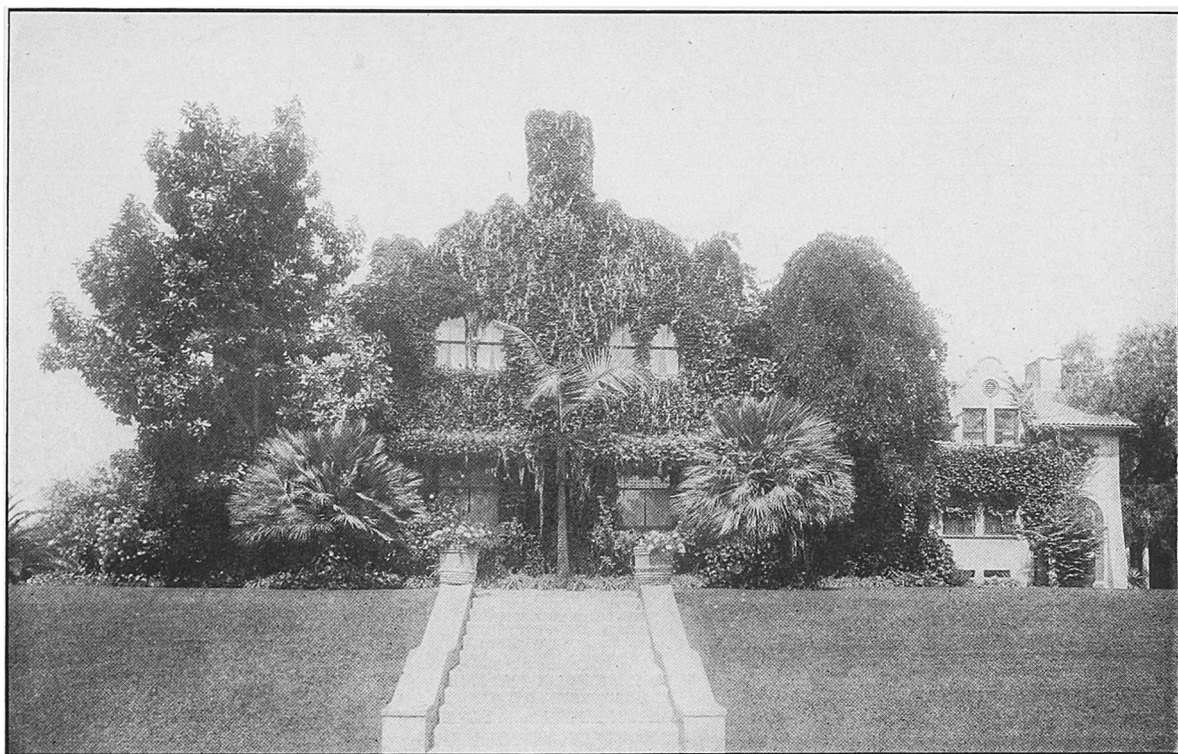
BY CHARLES DE KAY

THE late General Harrison Gray Otis may be remembered as soldier or as editor, but in more recent years as the victim of a secret organization of scoundrels who used dynamite to blow up the offices of *The Times* of Los Angeles, California, because that paper was opposed to the campaign of *sabotage* and terrorism conducted by aliens and others in different States of the Union. The McNamara bombs killed twenty-two men connected with the paper. At his home, called "The Bivouac," General Otis put up a building on a smaller scale like the one destroyed to remain a memorial and tribute to the dead; he fixed to its inner walls certain bronze tablets bearing their names, because he considered that they were just as much soldiers who died for a patriotic cause as if they had worn uniforms and confronted an enemy in fair and open fight. It was indeed a war in which they engaged, war against dastardly foes and in the cause of order, civic peace and the rights of men to make their living without asking permission of tyrants and murderers.

Before he died General Otis had the satisfaction of deeding to the city of Los Angeles his property on Wilshire Boulevard skirting Westlake Park, together with four buildings thereon which are to be used as art galleries and a museum. It is under-

stood that such collections of art objects as "The Bivouac" contains go with the gift; for General Otis was something of a collector, even if his pictures and *bibelots* would not figure greatly when compared with the treasures assembled by some other collectors. These buildings are shown in the accompanying illustrations.

Los Angeles is a city of well-to-do and wealthy, more or less angelic people who have the virtues and failings of those to whom competency has come with comparative ease. If one can arouse their interest they are freehanded and energetic, but for the most part live as if the town in which they dwell had no call on them so long as they pay their taxes. Civic feeling is difficult to stir among these complacent, well-fed, well-clad Americans. It was therefore a bit of inspiration on the part of General Otis to offer them an example and indicate by his princely gift the necessity of doing something more than fulfil the ordinary obligations of a citizen: by taking thought for the recreation and instruction of all fellow-citizens. Instead of founding a hospital—which is commonly the first impulse of a good man who looks forward to giving help to the next generation—he deviated from the ordinary course and laid the foundation for a public building to contain things that belong to Every Man's post-



"THE BIVOUAC" LOOKING TOWARD WESTLAKE PARK

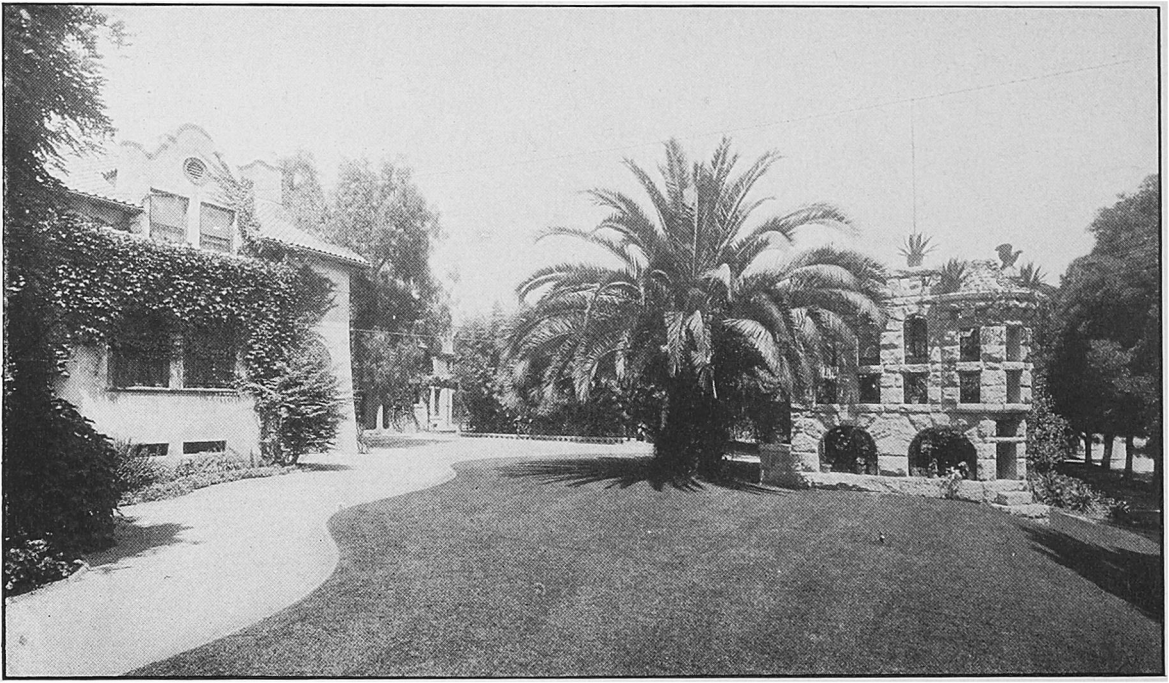
graduate course—to take or to leave, to ignore or enjoy, to sneer at or adore, as the individual, following his temperament or education, may elect. We can imagine easily enough that the gift to Los Angeles may permit a good many citizens to become angels in another sense and may induce some to give energy, some, wealth and others works of art, until presently we shall have yet one more central spot whence ideas of art will radiate on the country round about.

At any rate General Otis had no narrow or restricted forecast as to the future of his gift and he ought to know his fellow-citizens. When he wrote to the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles presenting the property, he outlined some of the purposes for which "The Bivouac" might be used. There were his own collections of modern prints and old engravings on steel, copper, stone and wood, together with another of ceramic art. He spoke of instruction to be given in color-photography and photo-engraving, artistic printing and binding—things that an editor and publisher might readily prize. But he also mentioned lectures on national, State and local topics, readings, musical recitals and dancing. Music, sculpture and painting are among the desirable things suggested, and even the idea that the drama, the teaching of the player's art and music on the scale of opera could be attained seemed feasible to him. He mentioned, further, teaching such as belongs to college and university—science, history, the languages and literature.

Unless the gift had been accompanied by a very solid endowment these indications of what he hoped Los Angeles might have some day on this spot would be extravagant. But what he meant was a belief in the generosity of his fellow-citizens. He was merely sketching the possibilities of the foundation

in case it should appeal hereafter to the generous instincts of the men and women of Los Angeles, who in that case might add some of the departments to the little nucleus established by his care, one after the other, assisted from time to time by the municipality in the shape of added buildings and an annual appropriation for upkeep, just as New York has aided and supported the Metropolitan Museum and other cities have acted in a similar way.

It is indeed one of the bright spots in a forecasting of the future of America as a place favoring the arts that there are so many citizens who are turning their thoughts to art-betterment in various forms. If they can not conjure up great artists, nor even tell with any certainty whether the promise of talent will be fulfilled, at any rate they can establish a school, a gallery, an art museum to aid an Aspiring One, if it be merely to show him some of the work done to-day and in the past, teach the general principles underlying the quest for beauty in the visible and the invisible worlds. A place of recreation and mental relaxation for the public such as many cities are now providing is likely to blossom out with a school, turn the attention of certain citizens to the arts and by fostering the art side of favorable natures exert a widespread influence, not merely on the arts themselves, but on industries also and affect the home life by supplying new forms of endeavor, new ideals, a wider outlook on life. It is easy to show the people who look to the main chance alone that cultivation of the arts is no sterile matter to a community but a fertile and wealth-bringing movement that should satisfy the hardest-headed economist of them all. Nor is it lightly to be denied that the study of art makes a useful counterpoise in education to the too great preponderance of books. Book learning alone



SIDE VIEW OF "THE BIVOUAC" WITH REPLICA OF THE DESTROYED TIMES BUILDING

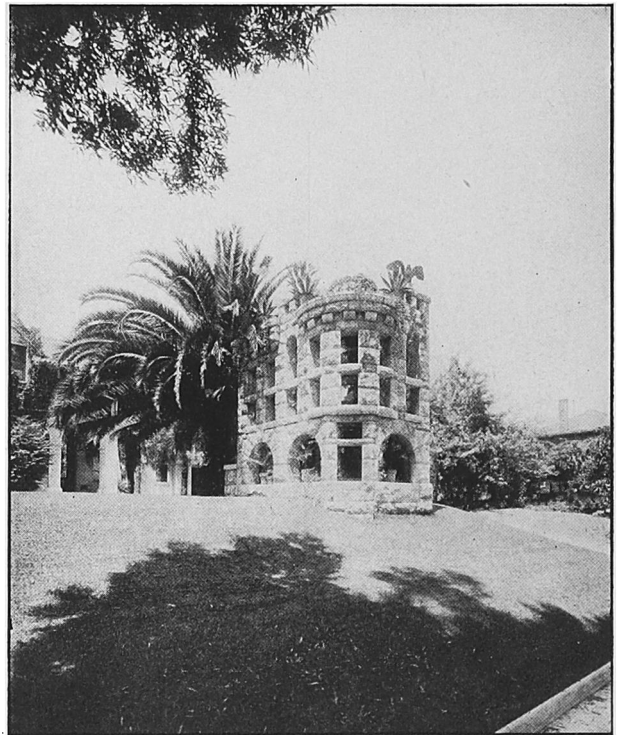
is a perilous thing, as a number of eminent persons have from time to time observed and it is well to enforce very early the fact that there are other ways of expressing emotion and recording fact besides the printed word. If the library has its uses, so has the art gallery also: the main point is, to value each at its real worth to a community and neither despise it as a storehouse of dead and fossil thought nor expect it to educate and civilize a countryside through some magic in arts and letters. The foundation at Los Angeles is a mere sketch, a ground-plan, an expression of faith and properly guided it should cast a beneficent influence on its way.

Such beginnings have often proved the germs of great results; yet the way is not so easy as it probably appeared to General Otis. The prime necessity for the growth of ventures of this kind seems to be some one personality strong enough and devoted enough to the cause to "carry on" as they say now in the great war. And he has to be a man who knows letters and the arts and understands men. Otherwise the project gets to a certain point, stops and stagnates in the hands of well-meaning but incompetent people; or, what is perhaps worse, it becomes one of the minor spoils to be handed over to place-hunters, because it is a municipal affair and shares the fate of places in the gift of politicians. The New York art museum escaped this by never allowing itself as a *society* to become the property of City or State. Its collections are its own, not the City's. If Los Angeles wants to make a great success of this gift, citizens should form an organization free from the municipality and utilize the gift as the place for its collections and endeavors, without subjecting the society to the risks and uncertainties of political changes.

As will be seen from the pictures, the reproduction of *The Times* building is treated as a decorative pavilion apart from the mansion and forms a place

for growing flowers, vines and supporting trees. The house itself is long, low and rambling, embedded in creepers and brilliant with the matchless wealth of blossoms that characterizes Southern California. Certainly this is a fine setting for the coming art gallery and museum of Los Angeles. The promise is great; the only question remains: will the angels know how to foster the plant?

Charles de Kay



A NEAR VIEW OF THE MONUMENT ERECTED BY GEN. OTIS TO THE NEWSPAPER MEN KILLED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF "THE TIMES" BUILDING